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Subject: Thoughts of Death.

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THOUGHTS OF DEATH.

"I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."—JOHN IX., 4.

The particular connection of these words of our Saviour with the history in which they stand, gives rise to some difficulty; but there is no difficulty in understanding their intrinsic meaning. It is only the reason why he should have uttered such words on this occasion that it is difficult to understand.

"As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."

It is difficult to perceive how the presentation of the case on which he was to exercise his mercy should have excited the train of thought which is contained in this passage; and I do not doubt that there was an intermediate scene. We know, in regard to the narratives of the gospel, by comparing them together, that many of the utterances of Christ, as they stand in particular gospels, had between one and another lengthened utterances, conversations, questions and answers; and the results are often taken by the different evangelists and put close together, while those conversations which led to such utterances are left out. Sometimes they are left out by one evangelist and put in by another, showing us the method which was pursued. So that what is recorded in Mark, for example, as isolated events, we shall find in Luke to have been connected by an important passage of history. Therefore, not only are we at liberty, but we are often compelled to understand that the connection between one scene and another, or between one utterance and another, may have been left out.

Why the sight of a man who was blind, and upon whom the Saviour was about to perform a miracle, should have excited a

SUNDAY EVENING, June 16, 1872. LESSON: PSALM XCI. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection), Nos. 1321, 621, 1257.

thought of death in him, we do not at present see. Something undoubtedly occurred which gave that inflection to his thoughts.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day [that is to say, while I am in life, and in the full possession of power]; the night cometh [that is, death], when no man can work."

It is from this passage that I wish, this evening, with suitable brevity, to discourse to you on the subject of a proper thoughtfulness in respect to death.

I meet, at the beginning, I know, with a natural repugnance which we all have at thinking of anything so disagreeable. I suppose that men almost universally turn from the thought of death as uncongenial to the free play of their faculties; as not consorted with their ordinary duties; as shadowing the joy of life; as bringing with it a check, a hindrance, almost suffocation at times. Perhaps it may be thought strange, therefore, when I say that death, when rightly thought of, so far from being an oppression, a veil, a sorrow, is that which will give edge to joy. So far from suppressing life, it will give intensity to activity. So far from being a kind of excluding influence, withdrawing men from the enterprise and the business of life, the inspiration of death will have a tendency to enrich industry, and make life more full in its hopes and more abundant in its results.

I protest, with you, against those thoughts of death which are distinctively gloomy; and therefore I protest against the baseness and the unworthiness of thinking of death purely in its physical aspects. I know how the apostle felt when he spoke, in Corinthians, of sowing the body in dishonor.

"It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power."

The degradation of the body which takes place in the processes of slow failing and dying; the transmutation of the features; the abasement of all that which we are accustomed to see—these things are horrible to be contemplated. I do not hesitate, therefore, to say that, ordinarily, it is anything but agreeable for me to look upon the face of the dead. I sympathize very strongly with the feeling of the apostle.

This is not my friend. This is the place where he was, but this not he. This face is not the illumined face which he bore. It is ot vital. It is only dust, returning to the dust.

In the olden time it was by some (not by all, I presume) supposed to be a wise thing for a man to overhang the future, to imagine how he would feel when he was dying, and to picture to himself the various steps of decline. In the olden time it was

thought wise for a man to have a hideous skull, a skeleton, symbols of death, before him, in order that as nearly as possible he might have brought to his mind the ghastly reality.

At the cathedral in Winchester, I think it was, (one of the most beautiful in Europe), I remember seeing the tomb of one of the prelates who had been eminent in power and reputation. The tomb itself was a most admirable work of art; but he was carved in marble, within, as a skeleton from which the flesh had well-nigh fallen. I looked through the reticulations of the marble, and saw the ghastly old fellow lying there. It was supposed that the spectacle would rebuke the pride of men, and turn their faces away from worldliness. It produced utter loathing and revulsion in me, as I think it must in every healthy and right-minded man. I do not think it strange that the young turn away from those things. It is a sign of life and of a good sound mind. That is not dying. That is not death.

Is that the death of the egg out of which comes the young bird and the new life? Would it be wise to look upon the shell that has been left in the nest after the bird has been hatched out of it, as the important thing? Dying is not what this body is when we have got through with it. And to hang upon its dread look is not wise. It is morbid and unwholesome. It is not good for the imagination, nor for the heart, nor for the life. It disturbs the fancy. It pollutes the sweet breath of hope. It takes away from men the sense of dignity. It is not this point of physical degeneration that it is wholesome for men to consider.

Dying is simple transmutation. Dying is changing form and changing condition. It is passing out from a crude into a ripe state; from a lower into a higher realm. It is the emergence from darkness into light. It is the glorification of those elements in man which ally him to God. It is the spreading of the wings that have been undeveloped before, or that have been circumscribed. It is looked upon in the Word of God as release from bondage—as deliverance from prison. It is bringing men back from captivity. It is setting them in a larger sphere. It is crowning them, and giving them a scepter, and making more of them. He who thinks wisely of death, gives a wide berth to dust and decay. There have been men who thought to make themselves more devout by spending days in sepulchers. If worms are men's best priests, then that is the best place for a man to go to church; but if a man believes in the redemption of Jesus Christ, in the resurrection of the soul, and that dying is going home, what business has he to prepare himself for all the glory of that exalted state by contemplating

the corrupted body which has been given back, or which is going back to its dust again?

When I think of death, I think of immortality. I think of the termination of this period of activity and of conscious exertion without regret. I think that I am here simply for growth. I think that when it shall please God to call me away from this world, I shall enter upon another state of being.

Let me think that I have but so many years here, so many duties, so much work to perform; let me keep in mind continually that all I do must be compressed within certain bounds; let me keep account with myself from day to day, and from year to year, with such frequency as experience may show to be wise; let me be mindful of how my work goes on, of what is doing, of what has been done, and of what has been neglected; let me so remember my days that I may apply my heart to wisdom. That is the wise and proper method of thinking of death.

What would be the effect of such a contemplation? Would it throw shadows upon the mind? Would it turn a man away from the duties of life? A wise contemplation of the shortness of our tarrying here, and of the reality and the glory of our inheritance hereafter, will tend to make a man more faithful in his secular duties. We are not chance atoms floating in this atmosphere. We are born into life, under God's ordinance, to pass through its stages, finding profit in its duties, in its labors, in its joys, in its sufferings, and having, either consciously or unconsciously, a work wrought upon us by which we are being prepared for that rest which remains for the people of God. Though we may not be able to trace the connection between any particular thing and the result in our nature, it dignifies toil, and care, and labor, and burdens, to know that we are under an economy in which we are being schooled and developed by those experiences in life which take us away from its physical aspects, and from their vulgarity; and to know that we are under an economy which is supervised by the providence of our Father, and out of which is to come a more glorified and perfected state. We must prize life, not because inherently we love it, or perceive that there is anything desirable in it, but because we know that in a large way through it God developes manliness in us.

Is the traveler less interested in the scenes of to-day, because he knows that to-morrow he will change his point of view and go on to some other place? When men go abroad—as now they are pouring in a ceaseless tide across the sea, to visit France, and Switzerland, and Italy, and Germany, and England—do you suppose that the fact that they abide so short a time in any one

city takes away from the interest which they have in that city? If they know that they have but so many days, do they not give themselves with more alacrity to the seeing of those things which one who is wise would wish to see? Because we are passing out of life, and because we abide here but for a day, is that an argument why we should not be interested in the economy and duties of the day? Does a true way of looking at death dispossess us of fidelity, and disincline us to a faithful performance of the duties of the hour? No. On the contrary, it intensifies our fidelity, and makes us more active. Yea, a wise thought of death will, I think, make men better business men.

If you are living at home, and are not trained as wisely as you ought to be, one going untimely into your room will find your raiment scattered, and your books and papers lying loose everywhere; and if suddenly you were called away it would be impossible for you to gather up your effects and be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. But if a man is traveling in Europe, and he stops, for instance, at Rheims, over night, and is to depart at four o'clock the next morning, his courier says to him, when he retires, "Have everything ready, so that we will not need to be detained a moment;" and he does. The traveler, or one who is perpetually changing places, keeps everything that he has with him packed snug. If he expects to stay days, and weeks, and months, and time is of no account to him, he is apt to leave his affairs in a careless state, and his effects distributed. And so, men who have no thought of dying let their affairs go on loosely.

Men and brethren, there is a great deal of foolish living in the physical aspect, because men have the impression that they are going to live forever. They know that they shall not; but they live as if they expected to. And this delusion is not confined to youth and middle life, but goes down into old age. Even in their declining years men have the feeling that everybody else will die, but that they shall not die.

There were three of the class to which my father belonged in Yale who lived to be old men, and a few years ago, when my father was alive, an old man, eighty years of age, infirm and quivering, came up to me, and said, "Your father and Staples and I were in the same class. Staples is dying in New York; and when your father dies, I wish you would tell me. I shall then be the remnant of the class." Everybody but him, he thought, was going to die! There was no consciousness in his mind that he was to go. And so we train ourselves, by habitual inconsideration, to the vague feeling that there is an endless period of time still lying before us. But

where men have the feeling that their time is limited, and that it may be cut short at any moment, they keep their affairs closely jointed, well buckled, safely harnessed.

It is very seldom, when a man comes to die, that he is prepared, even in his outward life, to leave. His household economy is not as it would have been if he had expected the summons. His business affairs are not as they would have been if he had anticipated being called away. But it seems to me that a Christian fidelity should lead every man, as far as possible, each year, to adjust his affairs so that if he should die his household would not be subjected to any loss, and no trouble would be entailed on his executors. The duty of leaving his affairs in such a shape that they can be easily taken care of after his death, is incumbent upon every man.

Are you living so? Think of what would happen if you should die to-morrow. It would not hurt anybody to think of the condition of his property in the light of his probable or possible death. What are your plans? Are you not like a vessel with its sails spread from the deck to the topmost spar, while a storm is breeding which you know nothing about?

Captain Knight said that once he looked up in his berth and saw the barometer plunging down in a manner which indicated a marked change in the atmosphere; and that he rushed on deck and called all the hands up, and had them take in sail, though there was a brilliant sky overhead. The men thought that he was crazy to begin to trim the ship then; and yet, before they could get in all their sail there arose a storm which struck them, and came near foundering them, as it was. They struggled many hours, and just managed to save themselves. It was by the prophecy of this dumb instrument that they were saved.

Many men glide along on the tranquil sea of life all unconscious that eternity is coming, and that it will sweep everything before it, and perhaps send them to the bottom. How many men I have seen who have been carried down by bankruptcy time and again! How many times have I seen men heart-broken by reason of their failure in business! How many men have I attempted to comfort in the pressure of their affairs! And when they were drawing near to death, what a mercy it was that they did not know what a storm was brewing, because the indications of it were hidden from their sight! What a blessing it was that they did not foresee the shattering of their enterprises, the dispersion of their households, the care and sorrow of their loved ones, the disappointment of those that were near and dear to them, and the revolution that would take place, because they had been living without any wise consideration

of the imminence of death, and of the condition of things which would exist should they suddenly die! I hold that every man, as a part of his business and economy, should measure the probable duration of his life, not by the tables of life insurance companies, but on the principle which our Saviour laid down when he said, "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

Yes, go to the physician; let him, with auscultation, prophesy a long life for you; let him sound your lungs, and pronounce them all right; let him examine your digestion, and testify that it is good; and on the strength of his judgment let the company take the risk, and you go smiling away; and the next week we hear of a funeral, and you are gone. You have the promise and prophecy that you shall live on and on; and yet, in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes, and all the threads in the loom snap.

Worse than that, death oftentimes is as the explosion of a bomb in a man's house, which, as it explodes, tears everything asunder. It is a wise thing if a man is brought up, in regard to his business, so as to keep a thought ahead of his possible departure, and to have his affairs in a condition in which he shall not leave a long train of ruin behind him. In the cases of many men it does not make any difference how and when they die. It will not be possible for them to leave things in any worse condition than they are in at present; but there are many men who, if they are not wise while they are living, will, when they die, strew misery with a broad trail behind them.

So, then, a wise consideration of the shortness of life, and of impending death, instead of discouraging effort, will quicken it; instead of tending to make men less careful about worldly affairs, will tend to make them more considerate in regard to them.

Due thought of the termination of this life, and of the beginning of the life that is beyond it, will make life itself sweeter, and the enjoyment of life better. No matter how richly endowed men may be, no man really gets his true colors, no man ever has a full sense of depth and breadth and strength, whose thoughts are not accustomed to take flight into the infinite, the invisible and the eternal. Creatures of time, bearing upon themselves the impress of the secular periods, and of these only, however richly endowed, want a certain comprehension. There is a certain shallowness about them. We can almost feel the atmosphere of men who are accustomed to ponder the themes of the eternal world. It gives volume and vastness to the ways and the courses of this life.

I like to see the loves of birds and of butterflies; and yet what are these wavering loves, which come and expire in the atmosphere?

What is it that makes human love nobler than the chirping love of birds, but this—duration, and its promise? Take away the reality of men's faith in the world to come, and how shallow the affections of this world are! They have all the feebleness and all the flaws of time upon them. The comforting view is that, love as poorly as I may here, I am but learning to love. My life on earth is not what I seek to make it; it is like uncombed flax, full of the sticks of that on which it grows. Peace, and gentleness, and self-denial, and heroism in loving, and the outpouring upon others of that love which never grows old, in the thought of God or of those that are with him—these are the things which result from a wise pondering of death and the future. And if we have no such experience, what are our affections in life? How poor they are! How unrich they are! Of how little worth they are! It is the want of a background to men's hearts that makes those hearts so flat and so poor. The heroism of love, its grandeur, the glory of its fidelity, the beauty of its life, its atmosphere, its horizon, and the vast and crystal dome of expectation that rise above it—it is these things which exalt men, which develop them, which make heroism deep, and which make sacrifices of virtue and of affection preëminently noble, enriching and satisfying. It is in the highest degree essential that men should have a sense of the other life.

Ah, how a sense of our departing from those whom we love quickens our fidelity while we are among them! How many mothers have looked in the face of the child as it lay in marble before them, and said, "Oh, if I had only known, with what zeal would I have taught! With what devotion would I have dealt with this dear one! But it is too late!"

When our companions, that have borne with us the heat and burden of the day, are gone, how many ten thousand things we think of that we have done, but that we never would have done if we had only known that death would take them! We reproach ourselves. The heart becomes a judgment-seat, and we stand before it culprits. We remember our temper, and our pride, and our selfishness, and our ambition. We remember how little we availed ourselves of the golden hours of a noble confidence. We remember how little we strove for things divine. And we say, "Oh, that I had that life to live over again! But it is too late!"

If by forethought then, men would but carefully take into account the shortness of their life, how it would tend to intensify virtue in the household! How it would tend to deepen the fountains of affection! How it would tend to quicken those ten thousand fidelities which redeem time from vulgarity, and make

the life of mortals the life of angelic creatures! We are sons of God; but we forget it, because we do not wear our crown. We forget that we have one. We are dwelling with peasants, with vulgar associates, and we take on their ways, as it were; and yet, we are sons of God. And he that thinks wisely of dying and of living again has brought to his memory what he is. He has borne back upon him a consciousness of his birthright which makes him a sweeter and purer and wiser and nobler man.

Have you ever stood by the bedside of those that you loved when they were dying? Do you remember your experience then? Do you remember what thoughts plowed your soul? Perhaps God gave back your friends. Perhaps he took them to himself. Have you been made as much wiser by that experience as then you thought that you should be? Has the remembrance of the nearness of death, of its certainty, and of the effect that it would have upon you and your affections, borne the fruit which you thought it would? Have these things been in you as a revelation and as a divine inspiration?

So, too, a wise consideration of dying inspires moderation in men. The immoderation of this life consists in using one part of ourselves at the expense of another. It consists in giving the whole of our fidelity to a limited sphere, to a few things, instead of rounding up the whole circle of our endowment. Thus men are living so that they are not a tenth part men. They live using their little finger, as it were—not their whole hand; and still less both hands. But thoughtfulness of the nearness of death, and of our liability to die at any time, tends to produce moderation in desire. It tends to restrain over-eager appetites. Especially it tends to check those wild outbursts to which we are subject. It compels us to measure again that which we have measured hastily.

Where a man has builded his house, and sheltered his household, and accumulated enough for food and raiment, for intelligence, for knowledge, for the satisfaction of every rational appetite; where a man is living so as to be able to secure food for every part of himself, it would seem as though he might give his mind to something higher and nobler than the mere accumulation of wealth; but he goes on building more, and earning more. How many of you would be willing to make a league and covenant with God to discharge your mind of covetousness when you had acquired enough to secure for yourself and family all the rational enjoyments of life! And yet, when you have secured these things, you will go on still in the insane ambition for wealth. There are men in New York who have money enough for a million men. There

are single men there who have enough money for a small nation. What good does it do them? What use is it to them? They are nothing but their own unhired clerks. The greater part of their possessions can never minister directly to them, except in the miserably poor way of ambition. And what is the ambition of figures? If a man has ten millions of dollars in America, he would not be worth any more if he had twenty millions. He has outrun his own power of computation and realization and use; and all that wealth which lies outside of a man's use is so much surplusage. What would it avail me if I owned a section of land ten miles wide through to the Pacific Ocean? How much of it could I cultivate, or even look at? What could I do with it, if I had it? There is such a thing as being made poor by abundance. And yet, men go on seeking wealth with an insane ambition. They do it after God has given them token after token of their quick-coming end. He has marked them with one sign after another. He has warned them by the eye, and by the ear. He has stamped his signet on their hair, and in their wrinkles. They ache with signals of mortality. But still they will not let go. They die with their hand clenched, and with their money in their hand; their hand perishes, and their money with it; and they go to give up their empty account before God.

Now, if a man had a thought of himself as a responsible creature, going from this lower sphere to a higher one, and marked the changes which occur in his advance toward death, do you not suppose that it would tend to correct this immoderation—this fantasy of desiring more than he can manage or use or enjoy?

How many men there are who, for want of some wise prevision, some prudent consideration of death, leave pretty much all their plans to ravel out after they are gone! When the careful housewife has knit through the day, and brought her stocking or glove to its termination, she will not let it go till she has fastened the thread so that the child's hand shall not ravel out her work; but how many men leave their work in such a condition that all that they have been doing ravels out!

Here are men who intended, when they should have advanced to a certain state and condition, to have done great things. They were just on the point of doing them when they were thirty-five years old. There were great generosities which they did not mean to omit. They were bound not to live for nothing. They were always going to leave their mark on the world. They were going to leave their mark on the world at forty. They were going to leave their mark on the world at forty-five. And, finally, at forty-six,

they left it, in the shape of a grave. They died with all their plans unaccomplished.

There are men who mean to build and leave hospitals. There are men who mean to build and leave schools. There are men who mean to found charities here, and endow beneficent institutions yonder. There are men who have been working and working, and saying, "When I get enough for my household, then I am going to work for God and mankind." Time runs on, and still they are telling what they mean to do. They continue to amass wealth, and so to prepare themselves for the benevolent enterprises which they have in view. At last they will die, having done none of these things.

It is not wise for a man to let death distribute his charities. It is not best to leave your wealth to be scattered by death. Death is a poor distributor. If God gives you skill for amassing the power of wealth, see that you build while you are living. Begin to build early, according to your means, and keep on building, and saying, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."

Do you mean to write hymns that shall be like God's angels singing hope in the hearts of desponding men? Write them now. Do you mean to sound out influences that shall make the neighborhood purer and sweeter, that shall straighten the things which are crooked, and that shall leave the ways of life clearer? Begin the work of reformation now. Do you mean to set on foot beneficent institutions of art and culture which shall work for humanity when you are gone? Do it now. For the most part, men work their threescore years and ten, and then disappear, and are forgotten; but it pleases God to give to some men the power of an earthly immortality. He who frames into noble English discourse the truths which every human soul needs, and gives it to the wind, lives on when he is dead. He who breathes truth in a poem, and gives it wings, so that it goes through the air cheering men, lives after death. And if men organize their wealth into institutions for good, they live in these institutions for thousands of years. What men do in life cannot be compared with what they might do by organized influences that sound down into the life which is to come. When a man thinks how little he can do in his lifetime, what a comfort it must be to know how much he can do after his life has ceased here by endowments and investments which shall go on performing works of beneficence and humanity for centuries to come. And if men only thought, "To do anything I must do it speedily," how many of them could duplicate, quadruple, quintuple, sextuple

their life and their deeds long after they had gone back to dust! But no man will live thus wisely unless he lives with the thought, "What I do I must do speedily."

There be some that hear me to-night whose attention is arrested, and whose thoughts are stirred up. You will go away, saying "That is a considerate view. It conforms to my best judgment. I mean to live in accordance with it." But alas! these resolutions will go with the morning cloud. There will be a transient ripple across your thought, but you will plunge again into your inconsiderate ways. You will forget to do what you ought to do. Some of you have restitutions that you ought to make before you sleep. There are reparations that you owe to one and another which ought to be made before you die. You are in danger of going out of life before you have attended to these things. You have not done all that you ought to do for your children. If it were made known to you that this night you would die, you would feel that you had not done all in your family that you fain would do. Your friendships are not in such a condition that you can afford to leave them just now. They have not been rich enough.

In the corn-field I plant a morning-glory. The corn itself is beautiful—the noblest grass that grows out of the ground. And yet, when I see the convolvulus twine around about it, and at every axil send out those graceful salvers, those exquisite cups, how much more beautiful are they than that on which they hang!

Friendships in life are very noble—substantial, hearty, genuine friendships; but oh, what exquisite tastes, what spiritual refinements, what touches of grace and beauty, coming from faith in God, should there be around about your friendships!

How vulgar is much in your family! How unsatisfactory is your intercourse with men! How scrawny your virtues are! How poor a life you have been living! You would blush to meet Christ. You are not fit to meet him. I do not charge you with vices and crimes, but I do charge you with being pigmies. You are dwarfs. You are not educated. Your powers of soul are not brought out. You are comparatively in a low state, degraded, undeveloped, stunted. You are not stimulating yourselves. You do not live as seeing Him who is invisible.

The thought that is laid out in the New Testament is exquisitely beautiful as well as pertinent. We are to live as those who are expecting to go to a wedding. We do not know at what hour of the night the voice of the bridegroom shall be heard.

The virgin, all tremulous with love, has spent the day in decoration; and the hair, the complexion, the eye, the hand, every part

of the body, are, by garments, by adornments, by flowers, and, by purifications, brought to the highest condition of attractiveness, because the hour is drawing nearer and nearer when the one most fond will call to lead her to her espousal.

Oh, soul of man, that is to be wedded to God, the hour of thine espousal is drawing near; and where is thy beautiful apparel? Where are the sweet odors? Where is that which shall make thee comely in the sight of Him who calls for thee?

Men and brethren, we are not ready to go to heaven yet. We are not ready to meet the love of Him who is most glorious in the fullness of a divine life. We are not prepared to go into the presence of Him that suffered for us. Look up, look away, a little while. Forget the things which sound in your ears from day to day, long enough to take the meaning of this life, and to measure it upon the scale of the life which is to come. Wake up the things that are asleep in you, and put to sleep the things that rage there, and bring yourself into that glorious atmosphere in which you shall see that which is not to be seen by the natural eye, that which is beyond your reach, that you may have a foretaste of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou stretchest the heaven above our head, and thence distill innumerable mercies. By thy hand, O God, the earth is turned, and the appointed seasons come, bringing their blessings. Night and day are we recipients of thy mercies. We have no need to pray for the light of the sun, nor for enriching showers, nor for summer, nor for winter, since all these things come with continual procession from thy provident care. We rejoice in these bounties, and desire to sanctify them by our own using, with a sense of thy power and of thy goodness manifested in them. We desire to stamp upon them the thought of God, to bear about with us evermore the sense of thy presence, and to augment the sense of our own joy, and of the dignity of our life, and of our hope in thee. We have need, day by day, to pray for the mercies of thy presence—for the realization of thy love. We need that touch of inspiration by which we can rise higher than the sense's contact; by which we shall discern invisible things; by which we shall pierce the veil, and see realities that lie behind and beyond the reach of the eye. Grant unto us this companionship, this blessed realization of thy presence and of thy love toward us, and to each one of us individually. Have sympathy with us in all those troubles by which we emerge from our birth-state into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Have compassion upon us in all our infirmities. Have mercy upon us in all our transgressions. Inspire in us a hatred of those things which bear us down and defile us, and a love for those things which lift us up and purify us and bring us into

thine own presence. We pray that thou wilt guard us in the hours of strength, lest through presumption we stumble and fall; and we pray that thou wilt guard us in the hours of weakness, lest from faintness of heart and cowardice we give up. Keep us, we beseech of thee, in all prosperity, that we may not be unduly elated by it, and grow proud, and think it is the strength of our own hand alone, and behold the help of God by which we have maintained our places. Grant that in the day of adversity we may not faint, knowing that there is growth in darkness as well as in light; that night has its mercies as well as day. May we be strong in the Lord, and be able, through all the changes of time and season, steadfastly to maintain our faith and our hope. Oh, that thou wouldst grant us such a release from the bondage and thrall of time that we might know our destiny, and feel that we are God's sons, and that our inheritance transcends the measure of any earthly possession! May we not fear the strength of man's hand. May we not fear what men can do unto us. May our thoughts so move toward thee, and in the royalties of the realms above, that we shall be able, while surrounded by ten thousand mischiefs and evils, still to rejoice in the Lord, though we may not rejoice in men. May we be able to rejoice in our eternal inheritance, though we seem to ourselves broken down and impoverished.

We pray that thy blessing may rest, this evening, upon those who have entered into thine house. Thou hast made this a very gate of heaven to many souls. Thou hast here met the mourner, and wiped away his tears. Thou hast here met those who were weighed down with care, and lightened their burdens. Thou hast taught the ignorant. Thou hast restrained those that were going astray. Thou hast recalled the wanderer. Thou hast baptized with joy those that were filled with mourning. Thou hast made this place sacred by the works of mercy which thou hast wrought in it. And we come again expectant. We always come knowing that we shall meet thee here. And grant, we beseech of thee, this evening, that those who are in thy presence may feel that God thinks of them by name; that he knows all their sorrow, and all their care, and all their fear, and all their trouble of every kind, even to the uttermost recesses of their hearts. We pray that all may open wide the door for thee to come in, and that they may be cleansed by the indwelling spirit of God, and receive true wisdom and comfort, and be prepared for all the duties of the day, and all the events of life.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt remember those who are separated from us—our dear friends, our brethren in Christ Jesus, all that are scattered wide abroad, up and down in the earth. They are all in one place to thine eye. Grant that in thee we may desire them day by day, and that we may in the hour of prayer meet them again, and find them as under the shadow of thy wing.

Grant, O Lord, that our varied experiences from day to day may prepare us for that higher life which impends over us. May we not shrink from it. May we labor so that we shall be accepted of God at whatever hour this life may end. May we not count it dear, nor seek to prolong it, nor dread its termination. Whatever mercies thou dost minister to us through the hours and the days of our pilgrimage here, may we be willing to lay down the burden at any time when thou shalt summon us. May we listen for thy call. As men wait and watch for the morning through the weariness of the hours of the night, so may it be given us to long for our rest—to be homesick for heaven. Thus we beseech of thee that we may be drawn toward thee in spirit as well as in expectation, so that, at last, when the permission shall come, and the welcome angel shall appear to call us

home, we may rise with great joy and seek our Father's house. And there, blessed forever in thy presence, and exalted by thy love to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus, we will give the whole praise of our salvation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt bring near to us the thought of our better life. Transform us to ourselves. In the glass of faith may we behold what we are to be, and by that may we rebuke that which we are. Give us some sense of the dignity of our final manhood, that we may turn back and look at the things of which we are vain and proud, and see how poor they are. How puffed up we are in life! How we measure and overmeasure ourselves! How we leave out of our estimate the things that most concern us! Dear Lord, dost thou love such as we are? And if thou lovest us, why art thou so long in shaping us to wisdom? Why art thou so long in rousing up in us salutary and remedial hope? Grant that we may be, more and more, children of God, not by name, but by inspiration. May we feel our dignity. May all our desires take on the pattern of the future life. And chastened, moderated, made more earnest, industrious, and faithful, may we so build that when we leave this world something shall remain here for others as a foundation on which to build. And grant, we pray thee, that at last, when our work is accomplished, we may be more than willing to go. Why should we live? What has life more than disappointment? What fountain is there that does not fail—whose waters do not turn to bitterness? What joys are there that the warmth of our hand in plucking do not wilt? Grant, we beseech of thee, that we may have such a measure of the joy of the heavenly life that we shall be glad to leave this world. May we desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better than life. And when we see thee, O thou crowned Saviour, on whose brow love sits—when we see thee as thou art, and not as with the imagination—then we will give the praise of our salvation to thee, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. *Amen.*

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